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OTHERS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF
THE NEW VERSE

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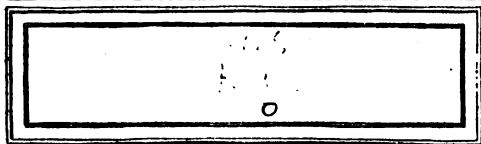


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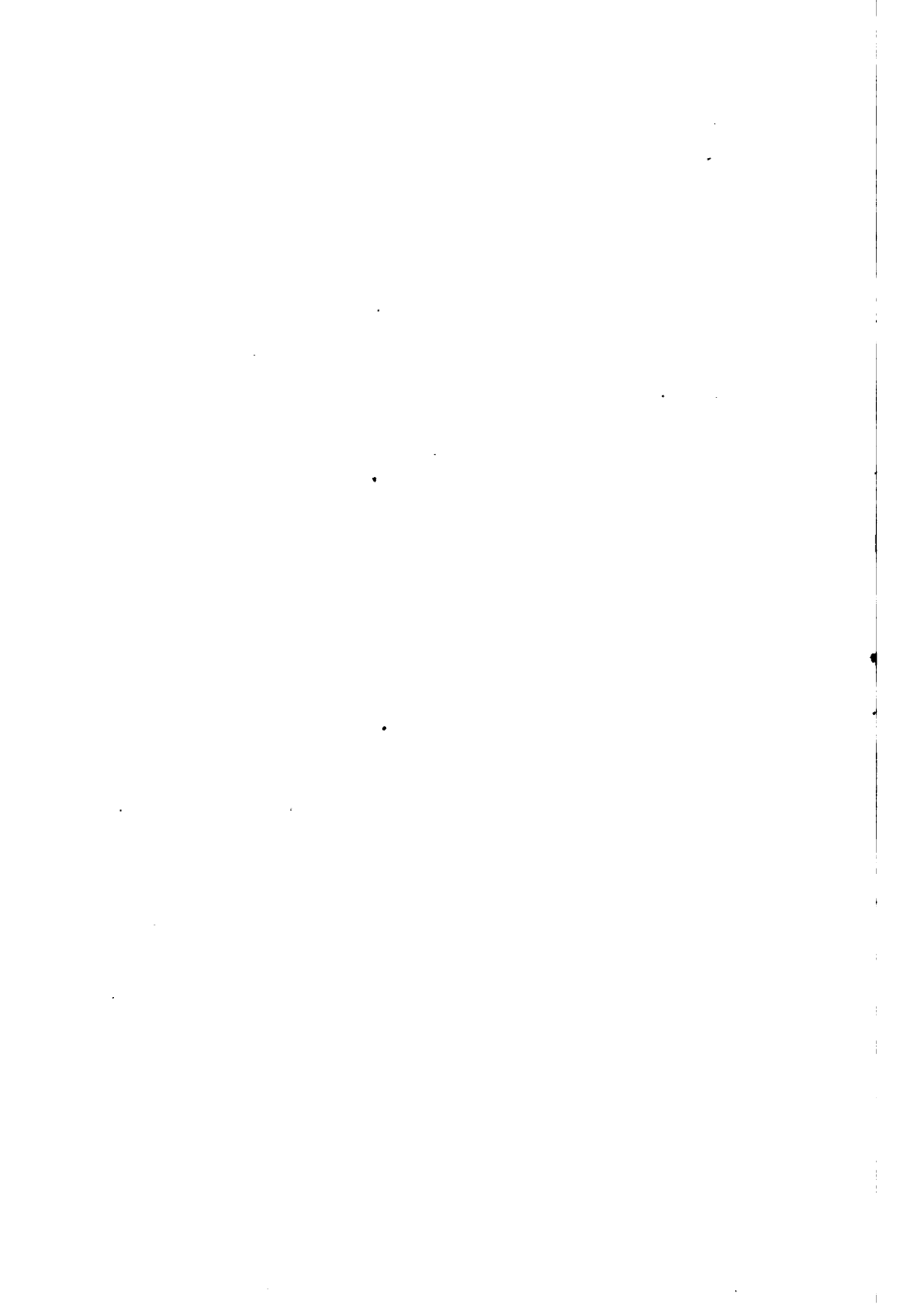
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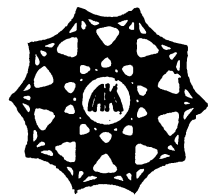


1917



O T H E R S

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE NEW VERSE



**"THE OLD EXPRESSIONS ARE WITH US ALWAYS,
AND THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHERS."**

OTHERS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE NEW VERSE

(1917)

EDITED BY
ALFRED KREYMBORG

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



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The Egoist
The Little Review
The Masses
Poetry, A Magazine of Verse
The Poetry Journal
The Poetry Review of America
Rogue
The Soil
Blast

ING

Ing? Is it possible to mean ing?

Suppose

for the termination in *g*

a disoriented
series

of the simple fractures

in sleep.

Soporific

has accordingly a value for soap

so present to
sew pieces.

And *p* says: Peace is.

And suppose the *i*

to be big in ing

as Beginning.

Then Ing is to ing

as aloud

accompanied by times

and the meaning is a possibility

of ralsis.

ARITHMETICAL PROGRESSION OF THE VERB "TO BE"

On a sheet of paper
dropped with the intention of demolishing
space
by the simple subtraction of a necessary plane
draw a line that leaves the present
in addition
carrying forward to the uncounted columns
of the spatial ruin
now considered as complete
the remainder of the past.
The act of disappearing
which in the three-dimensional
is the fate of the convergent
vista
is thus
under the form of the immediate
arrested in a perfect parallel
of being
in part.

FOR "SHADY HILL," CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

A drink into home use indicates early Italian. Other-
wise

*"the element of how
keeps insides. Nothing has now."*

But after the carpet whose usury can eat thirds?

Blunders are belted in cousins. Use what listens on
Sunday, and catchy elms will oxidize pillows.
Any need is original in absence.

The clothes are on the parlor. They are acted by
buttons. To extract the meet, invert as if to the
light, registering the first position at half. The
passage is in time.

As at the end of an equation of two to green,

*which have the butters of extra broken
on badges biting a needle to partners
if only the bridge is fluent
let it not nice.*

INTERFERE IN ORDER TO MORrow was once
upon a timePIECE OF MY MInd you do not

AXIOM

From a determinable horizon
 absent
 spectacularly from a midnight
 which has yet to make public
 a midnight
 in the first place incompatibly copied
the other
 in observance of the necessary end
 guarantees
the simultaneous insularity
 of a structure
 self-contained
a little longer
 than the general direction
 of goods opposed
 tangentially.

THEOREM

For purposes of illusion
 the actual ascent of two waves
 transparent to a basis
 which has a disappearance of its own
is timed
 at the angle of incidence
 to the swing of a suspended
 lens
from which the waves wash
 the protective coloration.
Through the resultant exposure
 to a temporal process
an emotion
 ideally distant
 assumes on the uneven surface
 descending
 as the identity to be demonstrated
the three dimensions
 with which it is incommensurate.

DEATH

I

A fan of smoke, in the long, green-white reverie of
the horizon,
Slowly curls apart.
So shall I rise and widen out in the silence of air.

II

An old man runs down a little yellow road
To an out-flung, white thicket uncovered by morning.
So shall I swing to the white sharpness of death.

AFTER-PAIN

Hill flowers salute his feet
As he parts them, climbing a slender path.
They are flowers of breath-like pain
Growing near the crest of every happiness he has.
He stoops and runs his fingers over them,
Then hurries to his white-pillared shelter of happiness,
With a queer reverence.

THE GHOST SWORD

With a burning tug,
Came her name, almost buried again
By the softly rushing noise of the room.
The silk over my soul was pierced,
And the filmy breast was cut
By something like pointed breath —
(Too utterly thin to be pain)
The little ghost sword of her name.

FRIENDSHIP

Grey, drooping-shouldered bushes scrape the edges
Of bending swirls of yellow-white flowers.
So do my thoughts meet the wind-scattered color of
you.

The green-shadowed trance of the water
Is splintered to little, white-tasseled awakenings
By the beat of long black oars.
So do your words cut the massed smoothness of
thoughts of you.

Split, brown-blue clouds press into each other,
Over hills dressed in mute, clinging haze.
So do my thoughts slowly form over the draped
mystery of you.

THE KING

Seven full-paunched eunuchs came to me
Bearing before them upon a silver shield
The secrets of my enemy.

As they crossed my threshold to stand,
With stately and hypocritical gesture
In a row before me,
One stumbled.
The dull incurious eyes of the others
Blazed into no laughter,
Only a haggard malice
At the discomfiture
Of their companion.

Why should such THINGS have a power
Not spoken for in the rules of men?

I would not receive them.
Covering my head, I motioned them
To go forth from my presence.

Where shall I find an enemy
Worthy of me as him they defaced?

As they left me,
Bearing with them
Lewd shield and scarlet crown,
One paused upon the threshold,
Insolent,
To sniff a flower.

Even him I permitted to go forth,
Safely, into the sunlight.

.

Therefore, I have renounced my kingdom;
In a little black boat I have set sail
Out
Upon the sea.

There is no land and the sea
Is black like cypresses waiting at midnight
In a place of tombs,
Is black like the pool of ink
In the palm of a sooth-sayer.

My boat
Fears the white-lipped waves that snatch at it,
Hungrily,
Furtively,
As they steal past like cats
Into the night:
Beneath me, in their hidden places,
The great fishes talk of me
In a tongue I have forgotten.

THE COMING OF NIGHT

(In the city)

The sun is near set
And the tall buildings
Become teeth
Tearing bloodily at the sky's throat;
The blank wall by my window
Becomes night sky over the marshes
When there is no moon, and no wind,
And little fishes splash in the pools.

I had lit my candle to make a song for you,
But I have forgotten it for I am very tired;
And the candle . . . a yellow moth . . .
Flutters, flutters,
Deep in my brain.
My song was about, 'a foreign lady
Who was beautiful and sad,
Who was forsaken, and who died
A thousand years ago.'
But the cracked cup at my elbow,
With dregs of tea in it,
Fixes my tired thought more surely
Than the song I made for you and forgot . . .
That I might give you *this*.

I am tired.

I am so tired
That my soul is a great plain
Made desolate,
And the beating of a million hearts
Is but the whisper of night winds
Blowing across it.

FRAGMENT — from “The song of creation”

*(Sung by God upon the evening of the eighth day for
His own comfort.)*

I am all things,
and in everything:
I AM YAHOVAH THE GREAT. . .
No thing is great as I am.

I sing:
hear Me, O men!

From the blue sea,
From the grey sea,
From the sea that is green
and treacherous,
Come the fishes
leaping in shoals.

I am the silver fishes,
And I the spreader of nets.

I am the furtive cat
and the sparrow that he watches.

I am the yellow corn,
And I am the reaper,
And the grey steel of the scythe
singing before him.

I dwell in joy,
and in pain . . .

(Are not these the words men taught Me
upon the noon tide
of this day?)

It is I who moan
upon the white bed of lovers.

(O for the white bed,
and the two mouths that are one mouth!)

I am the conception,
and the birth;
Mine the pain of coming forth
from the wet wombs of the mothers.

Hear My song! hear Me!
from My thighs you have sprung.

.

(O red and white
for the marriage bed of my lovers.)

I am the murderer
hanging upon the gibbet;
And with his victim I died,
dappled with blood and froth,
and rolling up My eyes.

I am the arrow
Striking down all of them:
I am the striker,
And I am the stricken.

I am all things,
and in everything:
I AM YAHOVAH THE GREAT . . .
No thing is great as I am.

SONGS

I

The buds
Coming to color
Make me weep.
For my own brown cloak
Has never broken.
Spring, rend me!

II

The hummings of the streets,
Their whisperings,
And the moon
White above me —
These, and the beating of my heart
Make me glad —

III

The moon
Strikes her hand
Across my face as I lie.
And the pain of it
Keeps me from sleeping.

IV

Red as dawn
The apple petals burn
Against my burning cheek.

V

Rainsound, sunset, and night,
Clear skies, and the falling of water —

Who would seek love?

VI

Your kiss
Is on my face
Like the first snow
On bewildered grass —

VII

Your hand and mine
Hold converse together.
We do not know what they are saying.

Although we listen,
Eager eavesdroppers,
We cannot understand
What they are saying —

VIII

That leaning tree was once a girl, and heard
A man's heart next her own. Remembering
She holds her arm across the moon for us —

IX

Of sticks and leaves
We made an image of Love
In play.
And then the image came to life
And seized us —

X

Clutching at immortality,
We found each other's hands.

XI

Take your arms away
That I may remember their pressure. —

XII

My hand is blind without you —

XIII

We two — we are young!
We have lips to sing
To sing and kiss.

We two, we are glad
We have hearts that beat
That beat — And break.

XIV

Take this kiss and wear it,
A shield that will ward off
My words that might hurt you —

XV

The sun is a fire in the sky
And the thought of you
Is a fire in my heart.

The gray sea
Will quench the sun —

XVI

As if life were a fruit
And you
The only tree on which it grew

XVII

The moments
Of our being tired of one another

Are the whetstone
Against which Life holds
The knife of our loving.

XVIII

Your arms can speak
More readily than your voice
Your shoulder touching mine tells breathless news.

XIX

Birds
And leaves falling in Autumn
Have tried to teach me sadness
But they have only taught me joy.
Perhaps it is you
Come to bring joy to me
Who shall show me sadness at last?

XX

THE CLOCK

I hear our hearts together
Like one clock
Ticking our lives away.
Could not some other
Have reminded us of Death?
Why must it be
Our own hearts
In the first hour
That they have beat together?

XXI

THE DAGGER

Life is a dagger
With no hilt.
As you tighten your arms about me
You only drive the two ends deeper
Into your heart
And mine.

XXII

Now as we hear
The little sobbing words
Half yours, half mine —

XXIII

I bend and touch the torches in your eyes
Their flame lights all the little room called Life.

XXIV

The wonder of your arm about me,
Of your face close enough to touch,
Of your soft breathing —

What can God show me
When I am dead
That can make me marvel?

THE FRESHMAN

His tadpole mind wiggles
in humorous waters
growing legs and laughter.
He aspires to solemnity.
He would be a frog
and sit
with other large frogs
upon a philosophic bench
croaking.

TO A NEW FRIEND

There is a silence round you
and one round me
distinct as the circles
round birches and pines.
What we have to say
is no more than bird's twitter.
But we will not be in haste
It is thro the long comrade sharing
of sky and earth
that trees
and silences
come to understand each other.

CRISS-CROSS

I am proud to be proud.
I take without scruple all that you are.
I fill your great hollow with my quiet fire.
Your warmth will pierce even thro the thick outer
 wall
where the beggars lie in numb weariness.
They will leap to their feet
and tramp over the plains
swearing a great oath
to touch the spires of dawn.
Gods will come . . . winged Gods will kneel to you.
When you give
they will think it is you.
You will think it is you.
But it will not be you.

TO ARMADA LAMONT

Little silver, gold-fish child you
swim bright in the bowl of my heart.
I feed you
broken bread of kisses —
scraps of caress
delicate
as Japanese rice paper.
You are always eager . . .
always hungry. . . .

SEA MOOD

My ecstasy has long blue fingers
like the sea;
moves to the rhythm of the tides
upon your shores;
carving stone strength and rugged silence
into slow passionate curves
of music.

THE CONVENT

Nice to be God . . .
My passions sit in long white rows
within the little chapel
sending incense up to me
or fast singing in lonely cells
or walk whispering together thro grey cloisters.
Last night a wildcat novice broke her vows
and now her sisters wear away the stone
praying for her.
They cannot guess who slipped the bolts
Who rode with her
Who gave her to her lover . . .
Nice to be God . . .

CHILDREN PLAYING

Watching I dive deep
into blue waters of imagination
where their life is
opal tinted, iridescent.
They move together in on flashing rhythm
weaving the pattern of a dance that once I knew
to the still beat of their own music,
making moon circles,
long bright crescent curves,
zig-zag lines of stars.
I cannot take my eyes from them. . . .

A heavy voice dropped like a stone.
They scatter.
Not a blue gleam,
not the impertinent flicker of a tail!
Sighing I emerge above sea.

BEFORE MEETING

There will be no shock
as of two strange sparks
suddenly fused;
no breathless pause
as when friends meet
after long absence.
It will be very simple
very easy.
The truth is already set to music.
There is only the singing.

PORTRAIT

Her significance lies
in an automatic conscience;
in a mind picked up after every punctual meal
in family virtues sewn on with a hand of steel
and family sins ripped off regardless;
in two accurate reproductions of herself
energetically modelled;
and in one small marionette
who gives her his name
and represents her at the polls.

THE TEMPLE

The little Chinese God of Happiness
sits
upon the mantel-shelf
cross-legged and calm.
His eyes make long journeys over sea
but he has time to nod to me
now and then.
With quiet hands I go on working.
I am building him
a temple.

THE PROBLEM IS

The problem is —
but I forget — there is no problem.
I have only to put my sea
into a bottle of thin green glass
simple of form, as you suggest;
and to enclose my sky
in a carven case of pure ivory.
The test will be
when these stand upon your writing-table.
Will my sea fill the room
with its salt and its singing,
with wine, with vigor and movement?
Will my sky escape
lean over and give
her suns and moons
and the lightning of her silence
and manna of rest
and musical sleep?

STOLEN

I crept slyly
to your table
. . . . Oo . . . m
Sugared peaches drowned in chianti . . .

Destiny
shaped heavily like a nurse girl
yanked me by the ear
planked me in my high chair.
"There," said she,
"Eat what is set before you,
Impudence."

Oh bread and butter
flat every-dayness
monotony
milk.

THE LITTLE TAILOR MEDITATES

. . . My idea would be to do away with the star-
manufactured
ready made garments
they never fit
like a suit cut to measure . . .
then there's too much putting on and off
too much running in and out
like a dog at a fair
in this business of birth and death . . .
Fate handing you out your birth-clothes at one door
and the Old Junk-man at the other
ripping them off again.
You're glad sometimes to be rid of the rags
other-times
it's hard to part with a beautiful thing . . .
If a man could clothe himself now . . .
evolve some kind of a one-piece garment
out of eternal stuff
that would be reversible
like a silk and wool sweater
suitable for any clime or star . . .
the heaven-weave practical here
the earth-warp fine enough
to stand the wear and tear of THERE
The Here and the There would be, you understand
according to the Will of the Wearer.
Such, begging the Lord's pardon
Would be my humble suggestion.

PRELUDES

1.

The winter evening settles down
With smells of steaks in passage ways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about our feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps!

2.

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.
With the other masquerades
That time resumes,
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

3.

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.
And when the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters,
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands;
Sitting along the bed's edge, where
You curled the papers from your hair,
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
In the palms of both soiled hands.

4.

His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block,
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes
And evening newspapers, and eyes
Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.
I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle,
Infinitely suffering thing.
Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

RHAPSODY OF A WINDY NIGHT

Twelve o'clock,
Along the reaches of the street
Held in a lunar synthesis,
Whispering lunar incantations
Dissolve the floors of memory
And all its clear relations,
Its divisions and precisions,
Every street lamp that I pass
Beats like a fatalistic drum,
And through the spaces of the dark
Midnight shakes the memory
As a madman shakes a dead geranium.
Half past one,
The street lamp sputtered,
The street lamp muttered,
The street lamp said: "Regard that woman
"Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door
"Which opens on her like a grin.
"You see the border of her dress
"Is torn and stained with sand,
"And you see the corner of her eye
"Twists like a crooked pin."
The memory throws up high and dry
A crowd of twisted things;
A twisted branch upon the beach
Eaten smooth, and polished
As if the world gave up
The secret of its skeleton,
Stiff and white.
A broken spring in a factory yard

Rust that clings to the form that the strength has
left

Hard and curled and ready to snap.

Half past two,

The street lamp said:

"Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,

"Slips out its tongue

"And devours a morsel of rancid butter."

So the hand of a child, automatic,

Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running
along the quai

I could see nothing behind the child's eye.

I have seen eyes in the street

Trying to peer through lighted shutters,

And a crab one afternoon in a pool,

An old crab with barnacles on his back,

Gripped the end of a stick which I held him.

Half past three,

The lamp sputtered,

The lamp muttered in the dark.

The lamp hummed:

"Regard the moon,

"La lune ne grade aucune rancune,

"She winks a feeble eye,

"She smiles into corners.

"She smooths the hair of the grass.

"The moon has lost her memory.

"A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,

"Her hand twists a paper rose,

"That smells of dust and old cologne.

"She is alone

"With all the old nocturnal smells

"That cross and cross across her brain.

"The reminiscence comes

"Of sunless dry geraniums

"And dust in crevices,
"Smells of chestnuts in the street,
"And female smells in shuttered rooms,
"And cigarettes in corridors
"And cocktail smells in bars."
The lamp said:
"Four o'clock,
"Here is the number on the door.
"Memory!
"You have the key,
"The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair,
"Mount.
"The bed is open; the toothbrush hangs on the wall,
"Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life.
"The last twist of the knife."

WORDS OUT OF WAKING

In the warm, fragrant darkness
We lay,
Side by side,
Straight;
And your voice
That had been silent
Came to me through the dark
Asking *Do you smell the lilacs?*
You, half in sleep,
Speaking softly, —
Indistinctly.
Then it seemed to me,
A sudden moment,
As if we lay in our graves,
And you were speaking across
From your mound to mine;
In the springtime,
Speaking of lilacs, —
With muffled voice through the grass.

ART

At last we let each other go,
And I left you:
Left the demand and the desire of you,
And all our windings in and out and bickerings of
 love;
And I was wandering
Through corridors and rooms of pictures,
Waiting for my mind to sharpen again
Out of its blur.

Now was stern air to breathe;
High, rational; clear of you and me.
The medals in their ordered cases,
Round,
Clean-edged,
Cooled me.
The tossing and tumbling of my body drew itself
 into form,
Into poise,
Looking at their fine symmetry of being.

DAMASK

White flowers,
Frail tracery,
Born of whiteness
In a white world,
You are more shadowy
Than frost flowers,
More pale,
Growing in your smooth atmosphere;
Thinly,
Without substance,
Vivid for a moment,
Then softly
Dimmed again;
White lost in white.

ARCHES

Under the high-arching bridge
The shadow arch
Bends
Curved,
Down into the water
And lies in the water as motionless
As the arch above it is motionless:
Masonry of the dusk.

HEY NONINO

I will put on my gay dress,
My corals and locket;
On my hair a blue ribbon,
And my softest shoes:
I will go and dance
Where the mirror will show me;
I will go and dance
And turn myself and courtesy
(O the mirror will be glad!)
And courtesy way way down.
Spreading out my dress
To watch how it looks,
Spreading out my gay dress over the floor.

DESIRE

Once you were always calling me,
Calling me when I could not answer,
Urging me where I could not follow —
So that I wished I had been born without desire,
As a stone.

But now many days you have left me.
And in the silence I have learned your meaning.

For a part of me is gone when you are gone;
I am less
And the world is less.

O let me have my longing back again!
Now gladly I will bear it;
Gladly I will hold it to me,
Though without release;
Always.

For what would be the pride of the sun itself
With its light gone?
O kindle me again, desire.
Return to me.
Return.

ESCAPE

O you, most gracious,
With soft breasts
And laughing kind eyes;
You, of such deep gentleness,
And wide-seeing, calm,
Unlaboring wisdom —
Whose body I love:
Let me be your baby!
Take me into your body,
To carry me unborn;
For I am tired of now being grown up
And thinking, and knowing:
I am tired of having always to will and make.
Let me sink myself in you,
In your love and steadfast quietness,
And not be fretting or contending any more.
Attainment allures me
And taunts me,
And I am weary of being urged.
I would like to rest from this living:
I would like to stop, and not be, for a long time:
Until I have rested and rested from life!
Take away what I have become
And let me be again unborn —
An unborn baby, and you carrying me!
Merged in you;
Not needing to live of myself:
Having my life through your life:
My peace in your serene;
In your sufficing strength.

RIDDLE

Physical,
So that nothing is more of the flesh;
Yet spiritual,
So that nothing is so wholly spiritual.

Without dignity,
Awkward, uncomely;
Yet of majesty equal with death and birth
And sacred with them.

Solemn,
What is more gay?
(With almost the gaiety of childhood)
Simple and swift and brief,
What in all the world is longer,
More intricate of result?

Desired above all joys.
And above all joys fled from;
To each new man and woman seeming utterly new,
Utterly their own
As if never tasted before;
Yet the property,
Common as dust,
Of all the millions of the world;
Old as life.

VITA NUOVA

I have entered into my heritance;
I am also one of the kingdom.
Oh it is good to the heart,
The pride of it swelleth the heart,
The love of it reacheth forth the hands in greeting.
Lo, I have part in the clouds
And the stars are mine and the sunlight;
The tall grass swept by the wind,
The silence of trees is for me;
The color and form of things,
The rapture is sound:
Thoughts that are born in my heart
And urge their way to my tongue,
Only the sweetest of them can never be gauged or
uttered.

EBB SAND AND STARS

I

From that last touch of fingers
The broken wire,
The message suspended
Over a desert of rain.

II

Peace . . . go,
And in strange places,
Unexpected turns,
You will find me.

III

Unforgotten?
Unremembered?
Does the flower forget light
Or remember growing?

IV

Here,
There will be sounds always
Of music beginning . . .
Born of that anguish.

V

Better to bless
Those steeps of yourself
Those flowered valleys,
With new grass.

VI

Peace . . . go . . .
Ah no . . . come closer.
Yes . . . go,
You cannot help come closer.

VII

Ebb sand and stars,
These be the healing mutes . . .
Beaten down are the sounds of the sea,
And I am alone.

VIII

The tree will whisper,
The window laugh,
The room hold me . . .
Trying to displace you.

IX

Yes, the wheat and the tares,
The able and pitiable things . . .
The sky of my memory of you
Floods them all.

X

I would go deeper
But I fear to tread the earth there,
I fear that crust.
There is all hell beneath it.

XI

And the nights,
They will be filled with lines,
Lines that vainly try to express longing, . . .
While the wind flaps a shutter.

XII

Printemps . . .
I told you the word,
And you said it over and over,
Not knowing it was gone.

XIII

O temple bells!
O far Japan of that verandah!
Such grief will come sometimes
From a spiral vine with flowers . . .

XIV

In the afternoons
I shall go quietly
To hear Harrison Williams play.
I shall sit on the green sofa, and not call you.

XV

The sumach will follow you,
The plum bloom and redbud,
And the flowers of another summer . . .
But I shall not feel goodbye.

XVI

These things that I say
They will be as nothing
They will be as dead grass
They will be burnt up with flame.

NEW SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

I

THE Three poplars I have watched
POPLARS A long time now in the west wind
 Which blows here always.
 Three poplars close together that lean
 In the wind . . .
 And I have never seen them touch each
 other.

So, my brothers, my good brothers,
With whom by the chance of Fortune
I have lived,
Let us lean to the stern fate
All one way if you like . . .
But let us not touch.

II

ONE O song, song . . .
STRING O untenable song,
 On one string of the harp
 I have heard you make the sweetest
 music!

III

EPITOME What is but a small thing
 Will have the changelessness of marble,
 too,
 The bent twig is a matter of direction
 only . . .
 It seems to me
 When I have heard the first speech of a
 child,
 I have seen the whole time
 Of a man on earth.
 There is interpretation
 In a song in the darkness,
 And a bird will have one feather erect
 always
 Like a flag.

IV

THE DOG Scored and bleeding was the ear of that
 dog,
 Helpless and hideless his foot.
 And how he stood even more unmoved
 Thereafter!
 How he annoyed sleep
 More than ever with the perception of his
 task;
 How he waited, half fallen
 By the door,
 And sounded joy-trumpets
 For the next coming of his enemy!

V

THE I am not smiling,
LITTLE Beside this mound —
FLOWERS For a long time now I have forgotten to
smile
At the wrecked and beaten ruin
Of so many a proud-armed thought . . .
But I watch the little flowers
Growing from it, —
Gravely I watch the little indomitable
flowers
Putting their heads up,
Thrusting out their fingers to the sun.

VI

CHRYSLIS They have piled one thing after another
upon me,
Until I am buried;
They have placed shadow upon shadow,
And over the top with my own cowardly
hands
I have laid a roof.

Perhaps it will be a long time before I
grow
To break from my house,
And drop it about me as a boy bursts
his coats . . .
But that I will do in the end.

What a falling of curious shadows there
will be,
Shadows that no one will linger with,
Shadows of the past
That none will cherish.

VII

PATHS Many a one will go down those paths
Where the wild ivy grows venomous,
And the rope vines shake in the wind
And the tall chestnuts make the light
dim —
Many a one who will never know
That Greece and all her wars
Could not outcry
The crying memories of those branches,
The troubled pity of those stolid trunks.

VIII

WAIFS Dark hopes,
Dim, stupid memories . . .
But I loved them too,
And it is another mystery
Of this new shining morn of love,
That she carries them about her
Like little slaves of her gladness,
Little shadows in her hair.

IX

RETURN Come then, all my dreams,
Come back, and be at home . . .
See, like the flame between the logs,
You will take life again,
You will creep higher and higher!
O wounded one,
O you of bitter love,

O you who were too great and angular
For courts,
O you who could not ever speak
So full was your desire . . .
Come then undiminished, all my dreams,
Come back and be at home!

STONES

It is best now
to give suffering its way with me,
like a sea with a stone,
and let the spray which is others' joy —
the spray dancing on those
I bumped against
while bounding and tumbling and rolling here —
give me content.

Suffering
carves smoothness
which cannot cut any longer —
should I roll again.

DOLCE

In the great clouds, there is rain.
A swift rain.
A rain that kills.

And a slow rain.
A rain that comes like leaves.

I would be the slow rain.

In the hills, there is a god
who rolls from side to side.

In the valley, a no-god
who lifts his arm like a tree.

I would be this one.

In the streets, there are children.
And there are old people.
Very old people.

I would not be the children,
but the old people,
the very old people.

There is a woman.
Big with gentle yielding.

I would be like her.

LEAFLESS

You are so straight and still.
What does it mean?
Are you concerned
in the tops of you now
with sky matters
and winter butterflies?
Do not the leaves you colored
trouble you longer?
Try and recall!

Try and recall:
(over this path
she used to tread her way,
over there
I used to throne them for her,
green, brown, red, yellow!)

Did you look at me?
Did you say something?

DAWNS

I have gone
from pride
all the way up to humility
this day-to-night.
The hill
was more terrible
than ever before.

Near the top
you may note a tall slim tree.
It isn't bent; it doesn't lean.
It is only looking back.

At dawn,
under that tree,
still another me of mine
was buried.

Waiting for me to come again,
humorously solicitous
of what I bring next,
it looks down.

BERCEUSE ARIETTES

I

We have a one-room home.
You have a two-room, three-room, four-room.
We have a one-room home
because a one-room home is all we have.
We have a one-room home
because a one-room home holds all we have.
We have a one-room home
because we do not want
a two-room, three-room, four-room.
If we had a two-room, three-room, four-room
we would need more than a one-room home.
We have a one-room home.
We like a one-room home.

II

She likes to make shades,
yellow shades for the window,
but if you ask her why
she likes to make shades,
yellow shades for the window,
she would not tell you why
she likes to make shades,
yellow shades for the window,
except that she likes to.
If you ask me why
she likes to make shades,
yellow shades for the window,
I could tell you why,

but you might think me proud,
so I will not tell you why
she likes to make shades,
yellow shades for the window.

III

There are no pictures on our three walls.
She does not like pictures on our three walls.
She likes pictures.
But she does not like pictures on our three walls.
Our three walls are happy.

IV

We have no dishes
to eat our meals from.
We have no dishes
to eat our meals from
because we have no dishes
to eat our meals from.
We have no dishes
to eat our meals from
because we can afford no
dishes to eat our meals from.
When we can afford
dishes to eat our meals from
(some day I'll sell an ariette!)
we will have dishes
to eat our meals from.
We need no dishes
to eat our meals from,
we have fingers
to eat our meals from,
(but won't you buy this ariette?)

V

She has two green pillows
on our black couch.
They should be cerulean bolsters
on a lemon silk divan
and you would not
challenge me that
she has two green pillows
on our black couch,
and I would not
challenge you that
yours has cerulean bolsters
on your lemon silk divan.
Have cerulean bolsters
on your lemon silk divan
and let us have
two green pillows
on our black couch.

VI

We have many many children
I would sing you of
but you would not call
them any any children.
And what is it to you how
many many children we have,
so why should I sing you of
any any children we have?

VII

I-re-mi-fa-sol-fa-mi-
love-her-mi-fa-sol-la-sol-fa-
and-she-sol-la-ci-do-ci-la-

loves-ci-do-ci-la-sol-la-fa-mi-

loves-me-re-mi-re-do.

And we-re-mi-fa-sol-fa-mi-

love-us-re-mi-fa-mi-we-do.

VIII

Our window is stained
with the figures she has blown on it.
Our window is stained
with the figures she has blown on it
with her breath.
Our window is stained
with the figures she has blown on it
with her breath
on which a spirit has blown —
A spirit? a saint? a sprite?
who was it
blew figures on her breath
that our window is stained
with the figures she has blown on it?

IX

*This room
was our cradle.
It will rock
in our memory
no matter what
we grow to.*

AT THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE

A thousand women's eyes
Riveted to the unrealisable
Scatter the wash-stand of the card-teller
Defiled marble of Carrara
 On which she spreads
Color-picture maps of destiny
In the corner
Of an inconclusive bed-room

 "Impassioned
Doubly impassioned
Sad
You see these three cards
But here is the double Victory
And there is an elderly lady
Ill in whom you are concerned
This is the Devil
And these two skeletons
Are mortifications
You are going to make a journey

At evening about love
Here is the Man of the Heart
Turning his shoulders to a lady
Covered with tears about matrimony

At the door of your house
There is a letter about an affair
And a bed and a table

And this ace of spades turned upside-down
'With respect'
Means that some man
Has well you know
Intentions little honorable

Here you are covered with tears
For a deception
The Man of the Heart
Is in thoughtfulness for a letter
He will make a journey at evening
And really lady
I should say
It will not be long before you see him
For there he is at the door of the house

And look
Here are you
And here is he
In life and thought
At the door of the house"

Muddled among the analine brightness of the Tauro
cards

The wheels with wings
The rows on rows of goblets
Passionate magenta blossoms
Hermits — bring luck —
Moons Prison-fortresses
Cudgels
A man cut in half
Means a deception
And the nude woman
Stands for the world

Those eyes

Of Petronilla Lucia Letizia

Felicita

Filomena Amalia

Orsola Geltrude Caterina Delfina

Zita Bibiana Tarsilla

Eufemia,

Looking for the little love-tale

That never came true

At the door of the house

THE EFFECTUAL MARRIAGE

OR

THE INSIPID NARRATIVE

OF

GINA AND MIOVANNI

The door was an absurd thing

Yet it was passable

They quodidienly passed through it

It was this shape

Gian and Miovanni who they were God knows

They knew it was important to them

This being of who they were

They were themselves

Corporeally transcendently consecutively

conjunctively and they were quite complete

.

In the evening they looked out of their two windows
Miovanni out of his library window
Gina from the kitchen window
From among his pots and pans
Where he so kindly kept her
Where she so wisely busied herself
Pots and Pans she cooked in them
All sorts of sialagagues
Some say that happy women are immaterial

So here we might dispense with her
Gina being a female
But she was more than that
Being an incipience a correlative
an instigation of the reaction of man
From the palpable to the transcendent
Mollescent irritant of his fantasy
Gina had her use Being useful
contentedly conscious
She flowered in Empyrean
From which no well-mated woman ever returns

Sundays a warm light in the parlor
From the gritty road on the white wall
anybody could see it
Shimmered a composite effigy
Madonna crinolined a man
hidden beneath her hoop
Ho for the blue and red of her
The silent eyelids of her
The shiny smile of her

Ding dong said the bell
Miovanni Gina called
Would it be fitting for you to tell

the time for supper
Pooh said Miovanni I am
Outside time and space

Patience said Gina is an attribute
And she learned at any hour to offer
The dish appropriately delectable

What had Miovanni made of his ego
In his library
What had Gina wondered among the pots and
pans
One never asked the other
So they the wise ones eat their suppers in peace

Of what their peace consisted
We cannot say
Only that he was magnificently man
She insignificantly a woman who understood
Understanding what is that
To Each his entity to others
their idiosyncracies to the free expansion
to the annexed their liberty
To man his work
To woman her love
Succulent meals and an occasional caress
So be it
It so seldom is

While Miovanni thought alone in the dark
Gina supposed that peeping she might see
A round light shining where his mind was
She never opened the door
Fearing that this might blind her
Or even

That she should see Nothing at all
So while he thought
She hung out of the window
Watching for falling stars
And when a star fell
She wished that still
Miovanni would love her to-morrow
And as Miovanni
Never gave any heed to the matter
He did

Gina was a woman
Who wanted everything
To be everything in woman
Everything everyway at once
Diurnally varigate
Miovanni always knew her
She was Gina
Gina who lent monogamy
With her fluctuant aspirations
A changeant consistency
Unexpected intangibilities

Miovanni remained
Monumentally the same
The same Miovanni
If he had become anything else
Gina's world would have been at an end
Gina with no axis to revolve on
Must have dwindled to a full stop

In the mornings she dropped
Cool crystals
Through devotional fingers
Saccharine for his cup

And marketed
With a Basket
Trimmed with a red flannel flower
When she was lazy
She wrote a poem on the milk bill
The first strophe Good morning
The second Good night
Something not too difficult to
Learn by heart

The scrubbed smell of the white-wood table
Greasy cleanliness of the chopper board
The coloured vegetables
Intuited quality of flour
Crickly sparks of straw-fanned charcoal
Ranged themselves among her audacious happinesses
Pet simplicities of her Universe
Where circles were only round
 Having no vices.

(This narrative halted when I learned that the house which inspired it was the home of a mad woman.

—Forte dei Marmi)

HUMAN CYLINDERS

I

The human cylinders
Revolving in the enervating dusk
That wraps each closer in the mystery
Of singularity
Among the litter of a sunless afternoon
Having eaten without tasting
Talked without communion
And at least two of us
Loved a very little
Without seeking
To know if our two miseries
In the lucid rush-together of automaton
Could form one opulent well-being

Simplifications of men
In the enervating dusk
Your indistinctness
Serves me the core of the kernel of you
When in the frenzied reaching-out of intellect to
intellect
Leaning brow to brow communicative
Over the abyss of the potential
Concordance of respiration
Shames
Absence of corresponding between the verbal sensory
And reciprocity
Of conception
And expression

Where each extrudes beyond the tangible
One thin pale trail of speculation
From among us we have sent out
Into the enervating dusk
One little whining beast
Whose longing
Is to slink back to antedeluvian burrow
And one elastic tentacle of intuition
To quiver among the stars

The impartiality of the absolute
Routs the polemic
Or which of us
Would not
Receiving the holy-ghost
Catch it and caging
Lose it
Or in the problematic
Destroy the Universe
With a solution.

CRITICS AND CONNOISSEURS

There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious
Fastidiousness. Certain Ming

Products, imperial floor coverings of coach
Wheel yellow, are well enough in their way but I
have seen something

That I like better — a
Mere childish attempt to make an imper-
fectly ballasted animal stand up,
A determinate ditto to make a pup
Eat his meat on the plate.

I remember a black swan on the Cherwell in Oxford
With flamingo colored, maple-

Leaflike feet. It stood out to sea like a battle-
ship. Disbelief and conscious fastidiousness were
the staple

Ingredients in its
Disinclination to move. Finally its hardi-
hood was not proof against its
Inclination to detain and appraise such bits
Of food as the stream

Bore counter to it; it made away with what I gave it
To eat. I have seen this swan and

I have seen you; I have seen ambition without
Understanding in a variety of forms. Happening
to stand

By an ant hill, I have

Seen a fastidious ant carrying a stick,
north, south, east, west, till it turned
on
Itself, struck out from the flower-bed into
the lawn,
And returned to the point

From which it started. Then adandoning the
stick as
Useless and overtaxing his
Jaws with a particle of whitewash, pill-like but
Heavy, he again went through the same course of
procedure. What is
There in being able
To say that one had dominated the stream
in an attitude of self-defense,
In proving that one has had the experience
Of carrying a stick?

THE PAST IS THE PRESENT

Revived bitterness
is unnecessary unless
One is ignorant.

To-morrow will be
Yesterday unless you say the
Days of the week back-

Ward. Last weeks' circus
Overflow frames an old grudge. Thus:
When you attempt to

Force the doors and come
At the cause of the shouts, you thumb
A brass nailed echo.

PEDANTIC LITERALIST

Prince Rupert's drop, paper muslin ghost,
White torch "with power to say unkind
Things with kindness and the most
Irritating things in the midst of love and
Tears," you invite destruction.

You are like the meditative man
With the perfunctory heart; its
Carved cordiality ran
To and fro at first, like an inlaid and royal
Immutable production;

Then afterward "neglected to be
Painful" and "deluded him with
Loitering formality,
Doing its duty as if it did it not,"
Presenting an obstruction

To the motive that it served. What stood
Erect in you, has withered. A
Little "palmtree of turned wood"
Informs your once spontaneous core in its
Immutable reduction.

"HE WROTE THE HISTORY BOOK,"
IT SAID

There! You shed a ray
Of whimsicality on a mask of profundity so
Terrific that I have been dumbfounded by
It oftener than I care to say.
The book? Titles are chaff.

Authentically
Brief and full of energy, you contribute to your
father's
Legibility and are sufficiently
Synthetic. Thank you for showing me
Your father's autograph.

LIKE A BULRUSH

Or the spike
Of a channel marker or the
Moon, he superintended the demolition of his
image in
The water by the wind. He did not strike

Them at the
Time as being different from
Any other inhabitant of the water. It was as if he
Were a seal in the combined livery

Of bird plus
Snake. It was as if he knew that
The penguins were not fish and as if in their bat
blindness, they did not
Realize that he was amphibious.

FRENCH PEACOCK

In "taking charge of your possessions when you saw
 them," you became a golden jay.
 Whatever you admired you charmed away —
 The color, habit, ornament or attitude.
 Of chiseled setting and black-opalescent dye,
 You were the jewelry of sense.
 Ridiculous at times — you trod the pace
 Of liberty in market place
 And court; Molière,
 The huggermugger repertory of your first
 adventure is your own affair.

"Anchorites do not dwell in theatres"; and peacocks
 do not flourish in a cell.
 Why make distinctions? The results were well
 When you were on the boards; nor were your
 triumphs bought
 At horrifying sacrifice of stringency.
 Despising sham, you used your sword
 To riddle the conventions of excess;
 Nor did the king love you the less
 Nor did the world
 In whose chief interest and for whose spon-
 taneous delight, your broad tail was un-
 furled.

SOJOURN IN THE WHALE

Trying to open locked doors with a sword, threading
The points of needles, planting shade trees
Upside down; swallowed by the opaqueness of one
whom the seas
Love better than they love you, Ireland —

You have lived and lived on every kind of shortage.
You have been compelled by hags to spin
Gold thread from straw and have heard men say:
“There is a feminine
Temperament in direct contrast to

Ours which makes her do these things. Circum-
scribed by a
Heritage of blindness and native
Incompetence, she will become wise and will be
forced to give
In. Compelled by experience, she

Will turn back; water seeks its own level”: and you
Have smiled. “Water in motion is far
From level.” You have seen it when obstacles
happened to bar
The path — rise automatically.

IN THIS AGE OF HARD TRYING
NONCHALANCE IS GOOD, AND —

“Really, it is not the
Business of the gods to bake clay pots.” They
did not

Do it in this instance, A few
Revolved upon the axes of their worth,
As if excessive popularity might be a pot.

They did not venture the
Profession of humility. The polished wedge
That might have split the firmament
Was dumb. At last it threw itself away
And falling down, conferred on some poor fool a
privilege.

“Taller by the length of
A conversation of five hundred years than all
The others,” there was one, whose tales
Of what could never have been actual —
Were better than the haggish, uncompanionable
drawl

Of certitude; his by-
Play was “more terrible in its effectiveness
Than the fiercest frontal attack.”
The staff, the bag, the feigned inconsequence
Of manner, best bespeak that weapon — self pro-
tectiveness.

TO BE LIKED BY YOU WOULD BE A CALAMITY

"Attack is more piquant than concord," but when
You tell me frankly that you would like to feel
My flesh beneath your feet,
I'm all abroad. I can but put my weapon up
and bow you out.
Gesticulation — it is half the language;
Let unsheathed gesticulation be the steel
Your courtesy must meet,
Since in your hearing words are mute, which
to my senses are a shout.

ROSES ONLY

You do not seem to realize that beauty is a liability
rather than
An asset — that in view of the fact that spirit
creates form — we are justified in supposing
That you must have brains. For you, a symbol
of the unit, stiff and sharp,
Conscious of surpassing — by dint of native superiority
and liking for everything
Self dependent — anything an

Ambitious civilization might produce: for you, un-
aided to attempt through sheer
Reserve, to confute presumptions resulting from
observation, is idle. You cannot make us
Think you a delightful happen-so. But rose, if
you are brilliant; it

Is not because your petals are the without-which-
nothing of pre-eminence. You would look —
minus
Thorns — like a what-is-this, a mere

Peculiarity. They are not proof against a worm, the
elements, or mildew
But what about the predatory hand? What is
brilliance without co-ordination? Guarding the
Infinitesimal pieces of your mind, compelling au-
dience to
The remark that is better to be forgotten than to
be remembered too violently,
Your thorns are the best part of you.

TO A STEAM ROLLER

The illustration
Is nothing to you without the application.
You lack half wit. You crush all the particles
down
Into close conformity and then walk back and
forth on them.

Sparkling chips of rock
Are crushed down to the level of the parent block.
Were not "impersonal judgment in aesthetic
Matters, a metaphysical impossibility," you

Might fairly achieve
It. As for butterflies, I can hardly conceive
Of one's attending upon you, but to question
The congruence of the complement is vain, if it
exists.

TO THE SOUL OF "PROGRESS"

You've made your mind
A millstone to grind
Chaff.
You polish it
And with your warped wit
Laugh

At your torso,
Prostrate where the crow
Falls
On such kind hearts
As its god imparts —
Calls

Claps its wings
Till the tumult brings
More
Black minute men
To revive again,
War

At little cost.
They cry for the lost
Head
And seek their prize
Till the evening sky's
Red.

MY APISH COUSINS

Winked too much and were afraid of snakes. The
zebras, supreme in
Their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-
colored skin
And strictly practical appendages
Were there, the small cats and the parrakeet,
Trivial and humdrum on examination, destroy-
ing
Bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent
Than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament,
Speech, and precise manner of what one might
Call the minor acquaintances twenty
Years back; but I shall not forget him —
that Gilgamesh among
The hairy carnivora — that cat with the

Wedge shaped, slate grey marks on its forelegs and
the resolute tail,
Remarking astringently: "They have imposed on us
with their pale,
Half fledged protestations, trembling about
In inarticulate frenzy, saying:
It is not for all of us to understand art —
finding it
All so difficult, examining the thing

As if it were something inconceivably arcanic, as
Symmetrically frigid as something carved out of
chrysoprase

Or marble — strict with tension, malignant

In its power over us and deeper

Than the sea when it proffers flattery in ex-
change for hemp,

Rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber and fur.”

SAID ONE LITTLE ROSE-BUG

"My existence is burdened
With the thought of the life,
Such a drab and deadening life,
My brother leads
In that decayed tree,"
Said one little rose-bug
Speaking from the heart of the rose.

THE ANCIENT BURDEN

We have moved our shop from
The Ghetto, —
Our children must forget
The Ghetto!
Could we but straighten our backs
We might forget
The Ghetto!

A MODERN ORCHARD

Oh! the tragedy
Of pruning souls
To a common height
That the fruit
May be reached
Without straining.

A PEACE PANTOMIME

Aureoled by a rainbow
The wail has gone
From the fire-swept pines;
Their feet fast in the soil
Their charred arms beseechingly
Stretched to the sky.
It seemed the ache of a wish
Expressed in voiceless violence.

STARVATION PEAK EVENING

Towering it stood,
Alone;
Pinnacled in white
Its great naked torso
Purple against a turquoise sky
Unpitied in its greatness.

THE OAK

Gaunt,
Stripped of leaves,
Death-defiant
In this thought:
There is nothing more to lose.

BROODING PINES

"Brooding pines
Why do you wail?
Is it that you are doomed
To live
When death
Takes all
About you?"

INHERITANCE

Ancient trees
Complacently usurping
The sunshine;
With forelooking tenderness
Whispering to the saplings
In their palsied shadows:
"There is safety
In our shadow,
But you will wither
In our shadow."

CLOUD SHADOWS

O River
Running to greet the sea,
What are cloud-shadows?
Are they sadness
Or vagrant joy
Of the sunlight?

WANDERERS

When we have a day to be idle
Let us not go
As kites that rise
On opposing winds,
Only so far as a string
Will let them.
But let us go out
Like errant kites
Where we can dream
Beyond the measure of things.

POPLARS IN SPRING

Joyous spires
Of lyric spirit,
Every branch
A thirsting impulse.

SEA WISDOM

My thoughts are carried to sea
Unborn by the beach-fire's quivering air.

With the salt sea wind
They return
And put out my fire,
And its quivering.

INFINITY

In dreams
I have been swept through space
On a star-hung swing,
Like a silkworm
On a slender strand
In a gale.

THE EXPLORER

"Will you go home with me
By the light of my lantern?
The night is dark
And the way is rough."

"I do not fear the ruts
Of the traveled road
And your lantern blinds my sight,
When I would see
The darkness clearer."

VERNAL SHOWERS

At the rude goodness
Of the rain
The flowers wince,
But drink.

THE RIVER

When you would drive turmoil out,
And let wonder in,
Follow the clearing
To the river;
Drink of the quiet
Of the river,
Till your soul is timed
To the river
Flowing unfettered
By moon and winds,
Broadening to the sea
With never a fear
Of the sea being full.

A NAVAJO POET

His bronze face aglow
With the light of a wish;
His whittled arrows,
Sun-vow arrows
Lean and clean,
For a journey
To the sun . . .

The shavings
He left
For whistling winds
To play with.

CHILD EYES

The bits of us,
Peering out
From child eyes:
What more is immortality?

OUR SON JACK

Our son Jack
Wild with life,
Went through
When law and nature
Said, "Go around."

Thus he died.

IN A GARDEN

There was a paved alley there,
apple trees and a lush lawn —
and over the grey wall where the plums were
stood the red brick of the chapel.
While over the long white wall
where the green apples grew
and the rusted pears
hung the grey tower of the church;
so high, you couldn't see the top
from that narrow garden.

In that narrow garden
on that lush lawn,
we found a ball left from some croquet game.
It had a blue stripe girdling it
and "ah" — I thought,
"it is your soul about me
and we are flung
between our separate desires."

In that narrow garden
on the lush lawn,
we flung this ball each to the other.

My eyes were only for your legs, your arms,
under that hot sun,
the hard ball hurt my hands
made them hot and prickly,
and I'd have stopped,

but feared losing you —
while you too stayed on playing,
“ ah if I'd but known
because you would not have me go.”

We played so long,
I'd ceased to think.
All thought, each sense,
rapt in the shimmering circumference,
the blue stripes girding it
shone in the sky.

Then I seemed looking down
from some far field
with this ball one of worlds
scorned
and cast from each to the other,
blue water girdling them.

By and by the tea-bell rang.

SPRING SUICIDE

Is it because they cannot bear the strain
of green sap mounting body and brain
that suddenly the warm hearts snap
that late beat safe in the town trap,
or where the mouldering edge of the rise
was the whole world to their mad eyes?
But yet the noisy street was cold
and cold the wide hillside.

All the hot summer they wander lost.
They know not why they weep in desolate places
in green brakes wonder at white faces,
and in far glades play with lost nereids.
Soft eyes of deer the fairer are to them than any
 maid's
and on the wide hillside and on the heath
they lie beneath the rutting bear
and eyes, stars, eyes, stars, threaten them.

Autumn for them is rotting leaves,
good smells, and quiet while night weaves
cold dismal mists that twirl and twist
into the ash-boles — sad tryst
the moon keeps with the white lake.
And if the trees quiver and shake
they do not fear them, lying there
with the wind whispering in their hair.
They do not fear the stars
or weep under the moon
though their heads go bound in iron bars
and an old tune
sings in each bleak brain.
Silently they merge into the shadows under the trees
head hanging on bent knees.

Still, there's a peace they get
when snow is on the ground
and the thudding heart beats cease
and blood flows cool again its usual round,
and once again they enter the old life,
friends, children, wife,
nor ever fear the white faces they see never
and knowing yet of feet that come and go

soundless on the snow,
do not tremble, though fierce eyes
watch with sighs,
fear nothing, for the snow folds them
in a white shroud, body and soul.

The spring comes and the sap wings
into body, into brain.
They do not know why such great pain
should take poor mortals with strong strings
and jerk poor limbs to each queer whim.
When the sun comes they follow him
over hill, over plain
till the moon drag them on again.
Wandering largely, here, there,
dreaming of winds, green eyes, red hair.
Till suddenly the moon is full
the sap leaps — one swift pull
loosens the carking body
that could not tranquil hold the strain
of running sap in body and brain.

Now they're dead.
Moonbeams chill each warm close bed
but cannot move poor anguished dust
call how she may, Must, must must!
And then no more to trace the swallow
or see the weak winds bend to and fro
the slim ash branches pencilled thin
on skies the night birds wander in,
or follow the sun or follow the moon
to an old tune
or kiss deer's noses . . .

WATCHING FOR FAIRIES

Not a fairy in sight,
Not the tinkle of a fairy bell;
Only a hillside singing with the light of May,
Yet it is well with us who watch, yes, very well.

*There may be fairies crowding on our eyes,
Teasing us to look,
And they may be as blind to us.*

The prow of a blue-white cloud sallies from the hill-
top,
Skimming the upland pastures of the sky
For prizes of fairy strife —
A star run down a blind sky-alley,
A panting, pleading moon.
Who would choose to anchor on this sun-locked bank
But us of human ill, cripples without a wing?
Let us wave our hands to the cloud-ship,
And turn to kissing.

Fairies, good-by!
(Let us kiss each other)
Now the fairy ship has vanished into mist.
(Let us have love of one another)
Let us pretend we are watching for fairies;
Perhaps they will hide between our lips,
Not to be left out.

You must not mind fairies,
If we doubt you are —

*Dear me, how sharp that twig,
It was not there before!*

See, fairies, we lay three berries,
Red, bellied flasks of syrup of the sun,
Upon a forked oak leaf;
And over them another
Leaf to keep the offering hid:
Thus beneath this tree,
And with the mossy, massive root for altar,
We vow constancy to you Invisibles.

*And now the earth, the root,
The crusty bark,
Fit comfortably like an old boot.*

You see, fairies,
It is not that we doubt, so much,
As wonder what you are like:
Like Barby here, perhaps,
(Thus do I blunder with "like" to "like",
Groping with blunt fingered wits)
Wee bits of Barbies,
Filamental folk whose halls are veins of violets.

Take care, O heedless Child!
Too late, your elbow
Hugely careering on elephantine bent,
Has crushed the fruit and wasted is our spell,
Blent with the wine within, upon the moss.
Were you a fairy, really, you would but break one
cell,
And drink to ecstasy its ripe content.
O, Barby!

But you are beautiful, you say I say,
That's your reply?
Well, what of that?
You'll wear your beauty out
As you will the pretty yellow hat
With its useless pretty ribbon.
That's just what I lament,
The profusion of useless pretty things,
As choking thick as dust;
Crusted with rust of rainbows thrown aside;
Thrust into chinks of space
In sheer lust of being once, and dying,
Over and over;
One flying curve of lace-like foam,
Breaking with the boom upon the land,
And then another, to no end;
A smother of fairy faces, modes and moons,
And empty shells,
And leaves and petals falling,
Littering the earth, clogging the feet of duty,
With beauty, just beauty.

This body makes my soul ache.
Where is my valet, Death,
To take from me the shoes that pinch,
The clothes that are too tight?
Somewhere he loiters, sleeps, perhaps.
Then will I spend them, day and night,
Unflinchingly in utter uselessness:
I will look up to the blue shell of the sky,
A baby robin shut in an egg;
I will look up to the bent boughs,
Like a man in a house,
Staring at the beams, painted green;

And smile foolishly, and think:
If this should be where the fairies live, I beg
For a house like theirs,
For airs so sweet to freight your thoughts to me,

And mine to you.
And lo! I have it, magically new,
The fairies' empty house, no lock, no door.
Let us be useless,
Let us kiss,
And live here always, under this tree —
A fairy house, a shade, a fire,
And a tent to our imaginings.
There is no Hell but unbelief.

*Curled in a bead of dew,
Their frail petals folded over them,
The fairies titter to themselves
And mock us.
Did you ever wonder why dew trembles of itself
Did you ever try to peer within,
And wonder what you saw?
I have.*

Not a fairy in sight,
Not the tinkle of a fairy bell;
Only a hillside singing with the light of May,
Yet it is well with us who watch, yes, very well.

MY PEOPLE

*My people are gray,
pigeon gray, dawn gray, storm gray.
I call them beautiful,
and I wonder where they are going.*

LOAM

In the loam we sleep,
In the cool moist loam,
To the lull of years that pass
And the break of stars,

From the loam, then,
The soft warm loam,
We rise:
To shape of rose leaf,
Of face and shoulder.

We stand, then,
To a whiff of life,
Lifted to the silver of the sun
Over and out of the loam
A day.

CHICAGO POET

I saluted a nobody.
I saw him in a looking-glass.
He smiled — so did I.
He crumpled the skin on his forehead,
frowning — so did I.
Everything I did he did.
I said, "Hello, I know you."
And I was a liar to say so.

Ah, this looking-glass man!
Liar, fool, dreamer, play-actor,
Soldier, dusty drinker of dust —
Ah! he will go with me
Down the dark stairway
When nobody else is looking,
When everybody else is gone.

He locks his elbow in mine.
I lose all — but not him.

STREET WINDOW

The pawn-shop man knows hunger,
And how far hunger has eaten the heart
Of one who comes with an old keepsake.
Here are wedding rings and baby bracelets,
Scarf pins and shoe buckles, jeweled garters,
Old fashioned knives with inlaid handles,
Watches of old gold and silver,
Old coins worn with finger-marks.
They tell stories.

OTHERS

(Fantasia for Muskmelon Days)

Ivory domes . . white wings beating
in empty space . .
Nothing doing . . nuts . . bugs . . a regu-
lar absolute humpty-dumpty busi-
ness . . pos-i-tive-ly . . falling off
walls and no use to call doctor,
lawyer, priest . . no use, boy, no use.

O Pal of Mine, O Humpty Dumpty,
shake hands with me.
O Ivory Domes, I am one of You:
Let me in.
For God's sake — let me in.

THE WORMS AT HEAVEN'S GATE

Out of the tomb, we bring Badroulbador,
Within our bellies, we her chariot,
Here is an eye. And here are, one by one,
The lashes of that eye and its white lid.
Here is the cheek on which that lid declined,
And, finger after finger, here, the hand,
The genius of that cheek. Here are the lips,
The bundle of the body and the feet.

· · · · ·
Out of the tomb we bring Badroulbador.

VALLEY-CANDLE

My candle burned alone in an immense valley.
Beams of the huge night converged upon it,
Until the wind blew.
Then beams of the huge night
Converged upon its image,
Until the wind blew.

GRAY ROOM

Although you sit in a room that is gray,
Except for the silver
Of the straw-paper,
And pick

At your pale white gown;
Or lift one of the green beads
Of your necklace,
To let it fall;
Or gaze at your green fan
Printed with the red branches of a red willow;
Or, with one finger,
Move the leaf in the bowl —
The leaf that has fallen from the branches of the
forsythia
Beside you . . .
What is all this?
I know how furiously your heart is beating.

EXPLANATION

Ach, Mutter,
This old, black dress —
I have been embroidering
French flowers on it.

Not by way of romance —
Here is nothing of the ideal,
Nein,
Nein.

It would have been different,
Liebchen,
If I had imagined myself,
In an orange gown,
Drifting through space,
Like a figure on the church-wall.

THEORY

I am what is around me.

Women understand this.

One is not duchess

A hundred yards from a carriage.

These, then, are portraits:

A black vestibule leading to a wrought-iron grille;

A high bed sheltered by a canopy and curtains;

A row of amber statuettes.

These are merely instances.

CY EST POURTRAICTE, MADAME S^{TE} UR-
SULE, ET LES UNZE MILLE VIERGES

Ursula, in a garden, found

A bed of radishes.

She kneeled upon the ground

And gathered them,

With flowers around,

Blue, gold, pink and green.

She dressed in red and gold brocade

And in the grass an offering made

Of radishes and flowers.

She said, "My dear,

Upon your altars,

I have placed
The marguerite and coquelicot,
And roses
Frail as April snow;
But here"; she said,
"Where none can see,
I make an offering, in the grass,
Of radishes and flowers."
And then she wept
For fear the Lord would not accept.

The good Lord in His garden sought
New leaf and shadowy tinct,
And they were all his thought.
He heard her low accord,
Half prayer and half ditty,
And he felt a subtle quiver,
That was not heavenly love,
Or pity.

This is not writ
In any book.

TEA

When the elephant's-ear in the park
Shriveled in frost,
And the leaves on the paths
Ran like rats,
Your lamplight fell
On shining pillows,
Of sea-shades and sky-shades,
Like umbrellas in Java.

DISILLUSIONMENT OF TEN O'CLOCK

The houses are haunted
By white night-gowns.
None are green,
Or purple with green rings,
Or green with yellow rings,
Or yellow with blue rings,
None of them are strange,
With socks of lace
And beaded ceintures.
People are not going
To dream of baboons and periwinkles.
Only, here and there, an old sailor,
Drunk and asleep in his boots,
Catches tigers
In red weather.

THE PLOT AGAINST THE GIANT

FIRST GIRL

When this yokel comes maundering
Whetting his hacker,
I shall run before him,
Diffusing the civilest odors
Out of geraniums and unsmelled flowers.
It will check him.

SECOND GIRL

I shall run before him,
Arching cloths besprinkled with colors
As small as fish-eggs.
The threads
Will abash him.

THIRD GIRL

Oh, la . . . le pauvre!
I shall run before him,
With a curious puffing,
He will bend his ear then.
I shall whisper
Heavenly labials in a world of gutturals.
It will undo him.

THE WIND SHIFTS

This is how the wind shifts:
Like the thoughts of an old human,
Who still thinks eagerly
And despairingly.
The wind shifts like this:
Like a human without illusions,
Who still feels irrational things within her.
The wind shifts like this:
Like humans approaching proudly,
Like humans approaching angrily.
This is how the wind shifts:
Like a human, heavy and heavy,
Who does not care.

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT
A BLACKBIRD

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbirds whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer —
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable course.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

KELLER GEGEN DOM

Witness, would you —
one more young man,
in the evening of his love
hurrying to confession, —
steps down a gutter
crosses a street
goes in at a doorway,
opens for you
like some great flower
a room filled with lamplight, —
or whirls himself
obediently to
the curl of a hill
some wind-dancing afternoon;
lies for you in
the futile darkness of
a wall, sets stars dancing
to the crack of a leaf —
and, leaning his head away,
snuffs (secretly)
the bitter powder from
his thumb's hollow,
takes your blessing and
goes home to bed?

Witness instead
whether you like it or not
a dark vinegar-smelling place
from which trickles
the chuckle of
beginning laughter.

It strikes midnight.

SPRING SONG

Having died
one is at great advantage
over his fellows —
one can pretend.

And so, —
the smell of earth
being upon you too —
I pretend
there is
something
temptingly foreign,
some subtle difference,
one last amour
to be divided for
our death-necklaces, when —
I would merely lie
hand in hand in the dirt with you.

SPRING STRAINS

In a tissue-thin monotone of blue-grey buds
crowded erect with desire against
the sky —

tense blue-grey twigs
slenderly anchoring them down, drawing
them in —

two blue-grey birds chasing
a third struggle in circles, angles,
swift convergings to a point that bursts
instantly!

Vibrant bowing limbs
pull downward, sucking in the sky
that bulges from behind, plastering itself
against them in packed rifts, rock blue
and dirty orange!

But —
(Hold hard, rigid jointed trees!)
the blinding and red-edged sun-blur —
creeping energy, concentrated
counterforce — welds sky, buds, trees,
rivets them in one puckering hold!
Sticks through! Pulls the whole
counter-pulling mass upward, to the right,
locks even the opaque, not yet defined
ground in a terrific drag that is
loosening the very tap-roots!

On a tissue-thin monotone of blue-grey buds
two blue-grey birds, chasing a third,
at full cry! Now they are
flung outward and up — disappearing suddenly!

EL HOMBRE

It's a strange courage
you give me, ancient star —
shine alone in the sunrise
toward which you lend
no part.

NEW PRELUDE

I know only the bare rocks
of to-day.
In these lies my brown sea-weed,
green quartz-veins bent through
the wet shale;
in these lie my pools left
by the tide —
quiet, forgetting waves;
on these stiffen white star-fish;
on these I slip barefooted!

Whispers of the fishy air
touch my body:
"Sisters!" I say to them.

DANSE RUSSE

If I when my wife is sleeping
and the baby and Kathleen
are sleeping
and the sun is a flame-white disc
in silken mists
above shining trees,
if I in my north room
danced naked, grotesquely,
before my mirror,
waving my shirt around my head
and singing softly to myself:
"I am lonely, lonely.
I was born to be lonely.
I am best so!"
If I admire my arms, my face,
my shoulders, flanks, buttocks,
against the yellow, drawn shades, —
who shall say I am not
the happy genius of my household?

BALLET

Are you not weary,
great gold cross
shining in the wind —
are you not weary
of seeing the stars
turning over you
and the sun
going to his rest
and you frozen with
a great lie
that leaves you
rigid as a knight
on a marble coffin?
— and you,
higher still,

 robin,
untwisting a song
from the bare
top-twigs,
are you not
weary of labor,
even the labor of
a song?

Come down — join me
for I am lonely.

First it will be
a quiet pace
to ease our stiffness
but as the west yellows
you will be ready!

Here in the middle
of the roadway
we will fling
ourselves round
with dust lilies
till we are bound in
their twining stems!
We will tear

their flowers
with arms flashing!

And when
the astonished stars
push aside
their curtains
they will see us
fall exhausted where
wheels and
the pounding feet
of horses
will crush forth
our laughter.

GOOD-NIGHT

In brilliant gas-light
I turn the kitchen spigot
and watch the water plash
into the clean, white sink.
On the grooved drain-board
to one side is
a glass filled with parsley —
crisped green.

Waiting

for the water to freshen
I glance at the spotless floor, —
a pair of rubber sandals
lie side by side
under the wall-table,
all is in order for the night.

Waiting, with a glass in my hand, —
three girls in crimson satin
pass close before me on
the murmurous background of
the crowded opera —

it is

memory playing the clown —
three vague, meaningless girls
full of smells and
the rustling sound of
cloth rubbing on cloth and
little slippers on carpet —
high-school French
spoken in a loud voice!

Parsley in a glass,
still and shining,
brings me back. I take my drink
and yawn deliciously.

I am ready for bed.

PASTORAL

When I was younger
it was plain to me
I must make something of myself.
Older now
I walk back streets
admiring the houses
of the very poor:
roof out of line with sides,
the yards cluttered
with old chicken wire, ashes,
furniture gone wrong;
the fences and outhouses
built of barrel-staves
and parts of boxes, all,
if I am fortunate,
smeared a bluish green
that properly weathered
pleases me best
of all colors.

No one
will believe this
of vast import to the nation.

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